

Bucks

By FRANK H. SPEARMAN

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SEE a good deal of stuff in print about the engineer," said Callahan. "What's the matter with the dispatcher? What's the matter with the man who tells the engineer what to do—and just what to do, how to do it, and exactly how to do it, with the man who sits shut in brick walls and bangs in Chinese puzzles, his ear glued to a receiver and his finger fast to a key and his eye riveted on a train chart—the man who orders and annuls and stops and starts everything within 500 miles of him and holds under his thumb more lives every minute than a brigadier does in a lifetime? For instance," asked Callahan, in his third way, "what's the matter with Bucks?"

Now, I myself never knew Bucks. He left the West End before I went on. Bucks is second vice president—which means the boss of a transcontinental line now and a very great swell. But no man from the West End who calls on Bucks has to wait for an audience, though bigger men do. They talk of him out there yet. Not of General Superintendent Bucks, which he came to be, nor of General Manager Bucks. On the West End he is just plain Bucks, but Bucks on the West End means a whole lot.

"He saved the company \$300,000 that night the Ogallala train ran away," mused Callahan. Callahan himself is assistant superintendent now.

"Three hundred thousand dollars is a good deal of money, Callahan," I objected.

"Figure it out yourself. To begin with, fifty passengers' lives—that's \$5,000 apiece, isn't it?" Callahan had a cold blooded way of figuring a passenger's life from the company standpoint. "It would have killed over fifty passengers if the runaway had ever struck 59. There wouldn't have been enough left of 59 to make a decent funeral. Then the equipment, at least \$50,000. But there was a whole lot more than \$300,000 in it for Bucks."

"How so?"

"He told me once that if he hadn't saved 59 that night he would never have signed another order anywhere on any road."

"Why?"

"Why? Because after it was all over he found out that his own mother was aboard 59. Didn't you ever hear that? Well, sir, it was Christmas eve, and the year was 1884."

Christmas eve everywhere, but on the West End it was just plain Dec. 24.

"High winds will prevail for ensuing twenty-four hours. Station agents will use extra care to secure cars on sidings. Brakemen must use care to avoid being blown from moving trains."

That is about all Bucks said in his bulletin that evening—not a word about Christmas or Merry Christmas. In fact, if Christmas had come to McCloud that night they couldn't have held it twenty-four minutes, much less twenty-four hours—the wind was too high. All the week, all the day, all the night, it had blown—a December wind, dry as an August noon, bitter as powdered ice. It was in the early days of our western railroading, when we had only one fast train on the schedule—the St. Louis-California express—and only one fast engine on the division—the 101—and only one man on the whole West End—Bucks.

Bucks was assistant superintendent, and master mechanic and trainmaster and chief dispatcher and stockkeeper—and a bully good fellow. There were some boys in the service, among them Callahan. Callahan was seventeen, with hair like a sunset and a mind quick as an air brake. It was his first year at the key, and he had a night trick under Bucks.

Callahan claims it blew so hard that night that it blew most of the color out of his hair. So houses had sprung up like dog towns in the buffalo grass during the fall. But that day home steads crept into dugouts and smothered over buffalo chop fires. Houses and cattle huddled into friendly pockets a little out of the worst of it or froze mutely in pitiless fence corners on the dividers. Sand drove gritting down from the Cheyenne hills like a storm of snow. Streets of the raw prairie towns stared deserted at the sky. Even cowboys kept their ranches, and through the gloom of noon the sun cast a coward shadow. It was a wretched day, and the sun went down with the wind tuning into a gale and all the boys in bad humor, except Bucks. Not that Bucks couldn't get mad, but it took more than a cyclone to start him.

No. 59, the California express, was late that night. All the way up the valley the wind caught her quartering. Really, the marvel is that out there on the plains such storms didn't blow our toy engines clear off the rails. For that matter, they might as well have taken the rails, too, for none of them went over sixty pounds. Fifty-nine was due at 11 o'clock. It was half past 12 when she pulled in and on Callahan's trick. But Bucks hung around the office until she staggered up under the streaked moonlight, as frowny a looking train as ever chugged on all rail.

There was always a crowd down at the station to meet 59. She was the

big arrival of the day at McCloud even if she didn't get in until 11 o'clock at night. She brought the mail and the express and the landseekers and the traveling men and the strangers generally, so the McCloud livery men and hotel runners and prominent citizens and prominent loafers and the city marshal usually came down to meet her. But it was not so that night. The platform was bare. Not even the hardy chief of police, who was town watch and city marshal all combined, ventured out.

The engineer swung out of his cab with the silence of an abused man. His eyes were full of soda, his ears full of sand, his mustache full of burrs and his whiskers full of tumbleweeds. The conductor and the brakemen climbed sullenly down, and the baggage man shoved open his door and slammed a trunk out on the platform without a pretense of sympathy. Then the outgoing crew climbed aboard and in a hurry. The conductor clung to the platform and the brakemen ran down stairs from the register and pulled his cap down hard before he pushed ahead against the wind to give the engineer his copy of the orders as the new engine was coupled up. The fireman pulled the canvas jerkily around the cab end. The brakemen ran hurriedly back to examine the air connections and gave his signal to the conductor. The conductor gave his to the engineer. There were two short, choppy snorts from the 101, and 59 moved out stealthily, evenly, restlessly into the teeth of the night. In another minute only her red lamps gleamed up the yard. One man still on the platform watched them recede. It was Bucks.

He came up to the dispatcher's office and sat down. Callahan wondered why he didn't go home and to bed, but Callahan was too good a railroad man to ask questions of a superior. Bucks might have stood on his head on the stove and it red hot without being pursued with inquiries from Callahan. If Bucks chose to sit up out there on the frozen prairies in a filmy barn of a station and with the wind howling murder at 12 o'clock past and that on Christmas Eve, it was his own business.

"I kind of looked for my mother to-night," said he after Callahan got his orders out of the way for a minute. "Wrote she was coming out pretty soon for a little visit."

"Where does your mother live?"

"Chicago. I sent her transportation two weeks ago. Reckon she thought she'd better stay home for Christmas. Back in God's country they have Christmas just about this time of year. Watch out tonight, Jim. I'm going home. It's a wind for your life."

Callahan was making a meeting point for two freights when the door closed behind Bucks. He didn't even sing out "Good night." And as for Merry Christmas, that had no place on the West End anyhow.

"D-I, d-I, d-I, d-I," came clicking into the room. Callahan wasn't asleep. Once he did sleep over the key. When he told Bucks, he made sure of his time, only he thought Bucks ought to know.

Bucks shook his head pretty hard that time. "It's awful business, Jim. It's murder, you know. It's the penitentiary if they should convict you. But it's worse than that. If anything happened because you went to sleep over the key, you'd have them on your mind all your life, don't you know—forever. Men—and—children. That's what I always think about—the children: maimed and scalded

and burned. Jim, if it ever happens again, quit dispatching. Get into commercial work; mistakes don't cost lives there; don't try to handle trains. If it ever happens with you, you'll kill yourself."

That was all he said. It was enough. And no wonder Callahan loved him.

The wind tore frantically around the station, but everything else was still. It was 1 o'clock now and not a soul about but Callahan. D-I, D-I, J. clicked sharp and fast. "Twelve or fourteen cars passed here—just—now—running a-a-a." Callahan sprang up like a flash—listened. What? Run, a-a-a-way?

It was the Jackson operator calling. Callahan jumped to the key. "What's that?" he asked quick as lightning could dash it.

"Twelve or fourteen cars coal passed here, fully forty miles an hour headed east, driven by the 99."

That was all J could send, for Ogallala broke in. Ogallala is the station

just west of Jackson. And with Callahan's copper hair raising higher at every letter, this came from Ogallala. "Heavy gust caught twelve coal cars on side track; sent them out on main line off down the grade."

They were already past Jackson, eight miles away, headed east and running down hill. Callahan's eyes turned like hares to the train sheet. Fifty-nine, going west, was due that minute to leave Callender. From Callender to Griffin is a twenty miles' run. There is a station between, but in those days no night operator. The runaway coal train was then less than thirty miles west of Griffin, coming down a forty mile grade like a cannon ball. If 59 could be stopped at Callender, she could be laid by in five minutes out of the way of the certain destruction ahead of her on the main line. Callahan seized the key and began cutting "Ca." He pounded until the call burned into his fingers. It was an age before Callender answered. Then Callahan's order flew:

"Hold 59. Answer quick."

And Callender answered: "Fifty-nine just pulling out of upper yard. Too late to stop her. What's the matter?"

Callahan struck the table with his clinched fist, looked wildly about him, then sprang from the chair, ran to the window and threw up the sash. The moon shone a bit through the storm of sand, but there was not a soul in sight. There were lights in the roundhouse a hundred yards across the track. He pulled a revolver—every railroad man out there carried one those days—and covering one of the roundhouse windows, began firing. It was a risk. There was one chance, maybe, to a thousand of his killing a night man. But there were a thousand chances to one that a whole train load of men and women would be killed inside of thirty minutes if he couldn't get help. He chose a window in the machinists' section, where he knew no one usually went at night. He poured bullets into the unlucky cement as fast as powder could carry them. Rebounding rapidly, he watched the roundhouse door, and, sure enough, almost at once, it was cautiously opened. Then he fired into the air—one, two, three, four, five, six—and he saw a man start for the station on the dead run. He knew, too, by the tremendous sweep of his legs that it was Ole Anderson, the night foreman, the man of all others he wanted.

"Ole," cried the dispatcher, waving his arms frantically as the giant Swede leaped across the track and looked up from the platform below, "go get Bucks. I've got a runaway train going against 59. For your life, Ole, run!"

The big fellow was into the wind with the word. Bucks boarded four blocks away. Callahan, slamming down the window, took the key and began calling Rowe. Rowe is the first station east of Jackson. It was now the first point at which the runaway coal train could be headed.

"R-o, R-o," he rattled. The operator must have been sitting on the wire, for he answered at once. As fast as Callahan's fingers could talk he told Rowe the story and gave him orders to get the night agent, who, he knew, must be down to sell tickets for 59, and pile all the ties they could gather across the track to derail the runaway train. Then he began thumping for Kolar, the next station east of Rowe and the second ahead of the runaways. He pounded and he pounded, and when the man at Kolar answered Callahan could have sworn he had been asleep just from the way he talked. Does it seem strange? There are many strange things about a dispatcher's senses. "Send your night man to west switch house track and open for runaway train. Set brakes hard on your empties on siding to spill runaways if possible. Do anything and everything to keep them from getting by you. Work quick."

Behind Kolar's O. K. came a frantic call from Rowe. "Runaways passed here like a streak. Knocked the ties into toothpicks. Couldn't bend them."

Callahan didn't wait to hear any more. He only wiped the sweat from his face. It seemed forever before Kolar spoke again. Then it was only to say, "Runaways went by here before night man could get to switch and open it."

Would Bucks never come? And if he did come, what on earth could stop the runaway train now? They were heading into the worst grade on the West End. It averages 1 per cent from Kolar to Griffin, and there we get down off the Cheyenne hills with a long reverse curve and drop into the canyon of the Blackwood with a 3 per cent grade. Callahan, almost beside himself, threw open a north window to look for Bucks. Two men were flying down Main street toward the station. He knew them; it was Ole and Bucks.

But Bucks! Never before or since was seen on a street of McCloud such a figure as Bucks. In his trousers and slippers, with his nightshirt free as he sailed down the wind. In another instant he was bounding up the stairs.

"What have you done?" he panted, throwing himself into the chair. Callahan told him. Bucks held his head in his hands while the boy talked. He turned to the sheet—asked quick for 59. "She's out of Callender. I tried hard to stop her. I didn't lose a second; she was gone."

Barely an instant Bucks studied the sheet. Routed out of a sound sleep after an eight hour trick and on such a night by such a message, the marvel was he could think at all, much less set a trap which should save 59. In twenty minutes from the time Bucks took the key the two trains could be together. Could he save the passenger? Callahan didn't believe it.

A sharp, quick call brought Griffin. We had one of the brightest lads on the whole division at Griffin. Callahan, listening, heard Griffin answer. Bucks rattled a question. How the

(Continued on next page.)

My Hair Ran Away

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TORTURE PROVED FRUITFUL

Request Gained Entrance to House by Pretending to Bear Message to Victims.

Springfield, Ill., Sept. 15.—Bound and gagged by masked robbers, who demanded their money, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Mundy, one of the wealthiest couples in Logan county, were compelled to lie in their homes for five hours Sunday night while the men searched for valuables. As a final request to compel Mundy to divulge the place where his money was hidden the burglars applied lighted matches to his and his wife's feet.

Mr. and Mrs. Mundy are both more than 60 years old. They were awoken shortly after 10 o'clock by three men who informed them that their daughter was seriously ill at her home some distance away. They were requested to dress and enter a cab to take them to their daughter's residence.

When the masked men were admitted to the residence they drew revolvers and ordered the couple not to give an alarm, declaring that they wanted money.

Instantly the men brought forth ropes with which they bound the aged man and his wife. Gags were then applied and the search for valuables commenced. One of the men demanded to know where the money was hidden, and, on being informed that there was only a small amount in the house, he and his companions proceeded to torture the couple to compel them to give the information.

Papers were piled around Mrs. Mundy's feet and a match was applied. The gag prevented Mundy from breathing freely, and, on a promise that it would be released, he told where \$150 was hidden. This was obtained by the robbers and they again made a demand for a larger amount.

Matches were applied to Mundy's feet and when he insisted that all the cash had been obtained the robbers desisted from the torture and ransacked the house. They went from cellar to garret, spending five hours in the search.

A bloodhound arrived from Decatur Monday and took up the trail, going to a spot some distance from the Mundy residence, where the men are believed to have entered a buggy. Later the dog went to the home of Albert Wehr, who was arrested. Wehr declares he can prove an alibi.

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J. J. Mann, of Fordyce, Ark., writes: Use Carlsbad's German Liver Power for ten years, cured my wife of female troubles. Haven't had a doctor for six years, formerly paid two or three doctor bills a year. Would not be without it. Worth its weight in gold! Guaranteed under the Pure Food and Drugs Act. Price 25c. Sold by all druggists.

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Ruins of Ancient City Discovered.

New York, Sept. 14.—M. H. Saville, a well known professor of ethnology, has returned from Ecuador, where he said he had discovered the ruins of cities near the coast which contained many evidences of a race hitherto unknown to present day scientists.

The professor's researches extended along the Pacific coast about fifty miles to the north and about the same distance to the south of the equator. Somewhere between these points and not over a distance of about 100 miles inland he found evidences of a city of antiquity.

The city, he said, had streets lined with houses of singular construction. Though the dwellings had been made of light material a sort of palmetto or thatch, they had been constructed evidently with a view of withstanding the shocks of the frequent earthquakes of the region and were intact.

In them were found utensils for cooking and other domestic purposes, made of pottery, wood and the like. He said he believed the city had contained 3,000 or more people five hundred years ago.

In his opinion the race was one of the highest in civilization living in America previous to the coming of Columbus.—Exchange.

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